

FLOODS AND FLASH FLOOD SAFETY

Prolonged rainfall can cause a river, stream or other waterway to overflow its banks. This slow-rising flood can take several days before the flooding begins. Most communities in the United States can experience some kind of flooding. Floods can happen anytime during the year, such as after winter snowmelts, spring thunderstorms, and fall hurricanes.

Another type of flood that comes swiftly and usually with little warning is the flash flood. Flash floods are rapidly developing floods that can happen with little or no warning after an intense rainfall, a severe thunderstorm, or a dam, levee or dike breaks. Flash floods can occur in or near mountainous areas, on small streams and even in large cities. Water levels can suddenly rise in heavy rainstorms, leaving little time before small streams, desert-washes and drainage ditches become raging rivers. Sometimes a flash flood can unleash its deadly force in just a few minutes.

SAFETY TIPS BE READY BEFORE THE FLOOD

1. Know your area's flood risks. If you're not certain contact the local National Weather Service office, Red Cross chapter, or Emergency Management Agency. (Civil Defense or F.E.M.A.)
2. If you live in an area that could flood, find out if flood insurance is available, what provisions it affords, and what... if any, additional coverage's are afforded above and beyond your insurance by local or national programs.
3. Keep insurance policies, documents, and valuables in a safe-deposit box.
4. Prepare a family evacuation plan. Do a practice run through once a year.
5. Prepare instructions on how to turn off utilities.
6. Watch the Weather Channel; listen to your local radio or national weather service broadcasts (accessible through readily available monitor radios), to keep track of weather patterns and know the risks and hazards as they develop. Flash Flooding can happen quickly so you'll want to pay attention during heavy rain events in your area.
7. Keep your car's gas tank filled, and your fuel deliveries current. Floods can cut power and knock out your fuel station's ability to pump gas.
8. Keep first aid supplies available.
9. Keep a portable radio, flashlight, and portable food supplies that don't require refrigeration available. The power could be cut off for days.

DURING A FLOOD WARNING

A flood **WARNING** means flooding is occurring or will occur soon. If a flood **WARNING** is issued for your area, go to safety.

1. Listen to local TV and radio stations for vital information.
2. Be careful moving furniture and valuable to higher ground. Rushing to move things can lead to injury and heart attack. Have someone help you. Certainly save your life and family first before your things.

3. Turn off your utilities as best you can if your home is likely to be flooded.
4. Evacuate if you are told to do so.
5. Don't cross barricades that are there to protect you from the flood waters.
6. Don't drive, walk or wade in flood waters. Keep your children away from the flood waters due to disease and the threat of getting washed away.

DURING A FLASH FLOOD WATCH

A flash flood **WATCH** means flash flooding is possible in your area. If a flash flood **WATCH** is issued for your country or parish, get set.

1. Stay tuned to TV and radio for vital local information.
2. Keep alert for signs of flash flooding, such as intense rainfall or rising waters. If you suspect flooding has started, **GO TO SAFETY IMMEDIATELY. DON'T WAIT!**

DURING A FLASH FLOOD WARNING

A flash flood **WARNING** means you may have only seconds to escape. A flash flood can happen so rapidly that you may NOT get a warning. If a flash flood **WARNING** is issued for your county, parish, or town **GO TO SAFETY IMMEDIATELY.**

1. Leave low-lying areas immediately.
2. If you are driving in a desert or canyon area and you encounter a flash flood, get out of your car and climb to higher ground immediately. Don't get swept away by the flood. Don't try to outrun a flash flood in your car. Climb to safety immediately.
3. Stay away from storm drains and irrigation ditches. You could easily get swept into one by the fast moving water.
4. Don't ever approach and drive on flood waters covering roads or bridges. The water has a force far greater than the power than you might think. It only takes a few feet of rushing water to sweep your car away or tip it over. Also, the roadway may have washed out and the rushing water may be deeper than you think.

AFTER THE FLOOD OR FLASH FLOOD

1. Throw out and start fresh with any food stuffs that have come into contact with flood waters. Also, any food that hasn't been able to hold in refrigeration.
2. Tests drinking water for potability. Water lines and wells could be spoiled by muddy flood waters full of debris and sewer effluent making them dangerous to drink.
3. Be careful with live electrical equipment and gas stoves. Both may be weakened or damaged resulting in an explosion or electrical discharge. Have all utilities checked by proper authorities.
4. Report damaged utilities and power lines to be fixed.
5. Ensure the weather threat that caused the flooding is over. More flooding could occur in an on-going heavy rain weather event.